

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on October 23, 2006, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Prior to this paper, claims 1-24 were pending. By this paper, Applicants cancel claims 1, 10 and 11, and do not add any claims. Therefore, claims 2-9 and 12-24 are now pending.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance for at least the reasons that follow.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank Examiner Mullins for allowing claims 3 and 18, and for indicating that claims 21-24 contain allowable subject matter. In reliance on this indication, Applicants have made the above amendments so that now every pending claim is or depends from a claim that was indicated as containing allowable subject matter. For example, claims 21 and 24 have been placed into independent form, and the remaining rejected claims have either been cancelled or had their dependencies amended to depend from claims 3, 21 or 24.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

In the Office Action, Claims 1-2, 5-8, 11-12, 14-15 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakano (U.S. Patent No. 6,114,784) in view of Muramatsu (JP 11-346446). Claims 1, 4, 8-9, 11, 15 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakano in view of Itoh (U.S. Patent No. 6,225,725). Claims 10, 13, 16 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakano in view of Muramatsu and Kurosawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,043,583).

In response, in order to advance prosecution, and without prejudice or disclaimer, Applicants hereby:

cancel claim 1 and amend claim 1's former dependencies to depend variously from allowed claim 3 or allowable claim 21, the latter now in independent form;

cancel claim 10, amend claim 23 (indicated as being allowable) to include the recitations of claim 10, from which it depended, and amend the dependencies of claims 13 and 19 to depend from claim 23;

cancel claim 11, amend claim 24 (indicated as being allowable) to include the recitations of claim 11, from which it depended, and amend the dependencies of claims 14 and 20 to depend from claim 24.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections under section 103 are now moot in view of the amendments herein.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

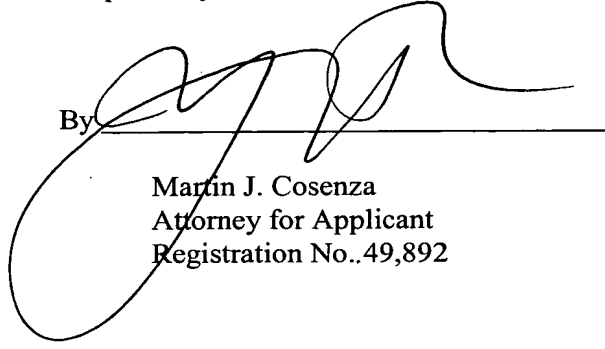
Examiner Mullins is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date January 23, 2007

FOLEY & LARDNER LLP
Customer Number: 22428
Telephone: (202) 295-4747
Facsimile: (202) 672-5399

By

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Martin J. Cosenza'.

Martin J. Cosenza
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 49,892